

Statement of Congressman Joe Courtney
Second District, Connecticut
ELDS Hearing
Groton, Connecticut
May 26, 2016

Good evening. My name is Joe Courtney and I am the Congressman for Connecticut's Second District in the House of Representatives. Connecticut has 332 miles of coastline, coves, and harbors on Long Island Sound, much of which is found along the coast in my district. As a member Congressional Long Island Sound Caucus, I have long been a strong advocate for protecting and rehabilitating the Long Island Sound as a critical natural, recreation and economic resource for our region and the nation.

I have long spent my time in Congress working closely with stakeholders on the federal, state, and local levels in addressing the critical issue of maintaining our ports, harbors, and channels. Since the drafting of the Dredged Material Management plan, or DMMP, last year, I have been proud to work with our regional branches of the Environmental Protection Agency and Army Corps of Engineers to ensure that this comprehensive management framework shape the designation and management of our open-water disposal sites in Long Island Sound.

This is why I strongly support the approval of the EPA's proposed rule for the designation of the Eastern Long Island Sound Dredged Material Disposal Site, or the ELDS. The EPA's preferred ELDS location, located south of the Thames River Estuary, would consolidate the current New London and Cornfield Shoals Disposal Sites into an area that is two square nautical miles and will be able to meet the dredging needs of eastern Long Island Sound for the next 30 years.

While the ELDS and other open-water disposal sites are exceedingly important to maintaining the dredging needs of Long Island Sound, it is also important that we consider alternative placement of dredged material when appropriate. To that end, this proposed rule continues the effort of the DMMP to identify and evaluate environmentally sound, on-land disposal options for certain dredging projects. In fact, in Connecticut, dredged materials have not only been used for shoreline replenishment, but also for capping landfills and brownfields sites upland. Notably, I was recently involved in helping facilitate a dredging project that helped to restore a beach in Madison, Connecticut using dredged sand.

The environmental soundness of Long Island Sound dredging is a clear focus of the ELDS. The proposed rule is consistent with the federally-approved Coastal Zone Management Plans for New York and Connecticut. Furthermore, it should be noted that without access to the ELDS, it is expected that transporting dredged materials to other sites, like the Rhode Island Disposal Site, will increase carbon emissions from ships and risk of dredged material spills as transport distance is extended. Connecticut has been responsibly dredging using open-water placement for 35 years and I believe that swift adoption of the ELDS, along with an increased effort to find

sustainable on-land solutions for suitable dredged materials, will provide the Long Island Sound region with a balanced approach for future waterway maintenance projects.

In addition to the critical goal of protecting Long Island Sound and its resources, access to ELDS is absolutely vital to the economy of my district and state – and that of the entire Long Island Sound region. According to the aforementioned DMMP, economic activities that utilize Long Island Sound waterways contribute more than \$9 billion annually in economic output.

Additionally, these economic activities support more than 55,000 jobs in the Long Island Sound region. As important, our region is host to a range of federal and military facilities dependent on the viability of accessible and cost-effective placement options. These include Connecticut-based facilities like Naval Submarine Base New London, the United States Coast Guard Academy, as well as the premier submarine builder Electric Boat.

Connecticut's maritime industry has a long and rich history. As the industry makes a resurgence, it is important to note that without reliable and timely dredging, our deep-water ports in Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London have seen an 80 percent decrease in imports over the last decade. Establishment of the new Port Authority, and increased focus on strategic investments needed to expand our major ports creates a significant opportunity to create jobs and grow Connecticut's maritime economy. Last year, I worked with state, federal and local stakeholders secure critical new federal funding to increase the capacity of the freight line—that we will break ground on this autumn—that runs to the Port of New London to support this focus on our state's maritime economy. Realizing this goal, however, will be contingent on a continued effort to maintain our channels and harbors properly.

Approving the ELDS is of critical importance to support navigation-dependent industries that border and traverse eastern Long Island Sound. The proposal states that shipping bulk materials, petroleum fuels, recreational boating and fishing, commercial fishing, interstate ferry operations, and military navigation all lend a hand to the Long Island Sound region's economic output. We must continue to embrace our maritime heritage and support this balanced, sustainable proposal to maintain our dredging needs.

The ELDS proposed rule has earned my support and deserves the support of stakeholders on both sides of Long Island Sound. I thank you for taking the time to consider my views on this important topic. I look forward to the timely approval of the ELDS and continued constructive engagement with stakeholders in Connecticut and throughout the Long Island Sound region on managing dredging needs in the future.